

**California Courts News Text**

**Story: STATE OF THE JUDICIARY ADDRESS TO A JOINT SESSION OF THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE**

**CHIEF JUSTICE RONALD M. GEORGE**

**MARCH 10, 2009**

As a coequal branch of our state government, the judiciary is in close contact with the legislature over the course of the year. But once a year the chief justice makes a formal presentation to a joint session of the assembly and the senate. Chief Justice Ronald George says his yearly “State of the Judiciary” address is a significant gesture.

*“I believe this symbolizes the interdependence and the cooperative spirit existing among our three coequal branches of government.”*

And he always gets a warm welcome from the full house. This year, he assured legislators that the court is doing its share during the budget crisis.

*“In the judicial branch, we have taken the initiative to reduce expenditures and to do more with less.”*

The sour economy is actually increasing caseloads.

*“As we know, criminal activity often rises in times of economic downturn. But many more areas are affected as well.”*

Like small claims cases, landlord tenant disputes, domestic violence, child support issues, and so many more. And the Chief Justice reminded legislators that we still have way too few judges, a burden on litigants.

*“The phrase ‘justice delayed is justice denied’ may be a cliché — but it is one that contains a great deal of truth.”*

There was some positive news in the address: the impact of the statewide courthouse construction program, funded entirely by court fees, penalties and assessments.

*“It has been reported that this courthouse construction program will provide more than 100,000 jobs, acting as a stimulus to California’s economy, with no burden on the state’s beleaguered general fund.”*

One of the most important messages that the Chief Justice brought to lawmakers was the need for greater security in our courthouses. Especially in light of the recent violence in Stockton, where a murder defendant attacked and injured a judge with a 6-inch spike.

*“We just cannot afford to have our courts be crime scenes or battlefields; they should be secure places for the peaceful resolution of disputes.”*

So Chief Justice George hopes legislators make court security a top priority – as soon as possible. I’m LK reporting.